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SIPDIS

PLEASE PASS TO DHS AND FEMA:ROCHELLE LIPSITZ
DEPARTMENT FOR USAID/OFDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: U.S. VISITS HELPS TURKISH FEMA REFORM TURKEY'S
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1. Summary: Turkey's Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) received the political endorsement of Deputy Prime Minister Sahin and key ministers to broaden its authority to coordinate Turkey's emergency management system. TEMA Director General Hassan Ipek said his December visit to the U.S. with Sahin was instrumental in convincing Sahin that Turkey needed to bolster TEMA's authority. Ipek will likely seek further assistance from FEMA as he implements reforms in Turkey's system. End Summary.

2. Ipek said that Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin was very appreciative to FEMA for arranging his December 1-3 visit to the U.S., adding that Sahin was impressed by the resources and authority available to FEMA to respond to crises in the U.S. Ipek said the briefings from FEMA and DHS and the visits to FEMA facilities were the culmination of Ipek's efforts to convince Sahin that Turkey needed to restructure its system to be more like FEMA. On January 27, Sahin chaired a meeting at which key ministers (Health, Interior and Public Works) gave their political endorsement for the restructuring of TEMA along the lines of its U.S. counterpart. After the meeting, Sahin announced that the government in three weeks would send Parliament a draft law to bolster TEMA's authority and restructure Turkey's emergency management system. Ipek said that the ministries will be able to comment on the draft, and he worried that "bureaucrats" could still seek to water down the ministers' "political commitment" to strengthen TEMA.

3. Turkey's Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) was created in 1999 after the deadly Izmit earthquake, but it has had little direct authority over GOT bodies for management of emergency situations. General Director Hassan Ipek explained that TEMA was created in response to pressure from the IBRD, but did not enjoy support from the government. It is an office of the Prime Ministry and has responsibility to coordinate the efforts of a number of Turkish government agencies to respond to emergency situations. However, it has never had adequate resources or authority to ensure that Turkey is adequately prepared to respond to emergencies.

4. Comment: Ipek was encouraged by the political decision to strengthen TEMA and emphasized the important role played by FEMA in convincing Sahin; however, he recognized that his agency lacked the expertise in the full range of emergency management issues. He said that he hoped that FEMA would be able to send some experts to help him implement his plans. Whatever its source, such assistance would be key to creating an effective coordination and standards-setting organization for major crises. USGS experts estimate that there is a 70% probability that Istanbul will be rocked by a serious earthquake in the next 30 years, resulting in tens of thousands dead. End Comment.

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